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AUTHOR Hyltenstam, Kenneth
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ABSTRACT

Different language sample elicitation techniques may be appropriate for different linguistic phenomena and for learners at different phases of acquisition. These techniques include elicited production, manipulation of given linguistic material (sentence combining, sentence completion), intuition and grammaticality judgment tests, introspection, cloze procedure, imitation, dictation or partial dictation, and translation. It also finds that different data types can locate the learner at various phases of learning, and that the choice of appropriate elicitation techniques depends on factors such as proficiency level, linguistic phenomena in question, age, and educational background. The comparison of results from different techniques suggests that there is a great deal of individual variation in the tasks a given learner can handle, which has implications for both data elicitation and teaching practice. (MSE)

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DATA TYPES AND SECOND LANGUAGE VARIABILITY

Kenneth Hyltenstam
Department of Research on Bilingualism

Stockholm University

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Kenneth Hyltenstam
Department of Research on Bilingualism.
Stockholm University

DATA TYPES AND SECOND LANGUAGE VARIABILITY

Introduction

One major concern in empirical L2 acquisition research is the question what kind of data best reflect the learners' current interlanguage competence, and what elicitation techniques should preferably be used in order to obtain the relevant data. Most treatments of these questions show that there are no simple and straight-forward answers to them. However, in many discussions, the underlying assumption is that it is, in fact, possible to argue in favour of certain kinds of data as being "correct", or decide on elicitation techniques in absolute terms, i.e. regardless of the goal of a certain study or the particular linguistic phenomenon that is focused upon.

Here, it will be argued that this is not possible. It will be claimed that the interaction between learner variables and linguistic factors must be considered in any selection of data. An obvious example is the interrelationship between the learner's degree of L2 proficiency and the complexity of the linguistic phenomenon that is studied; it seems reasonable to suppose that different degrees of proficiency allow different ranges of data types for the study of a particular phenomenon, and phenomena of varying complexity likewise make possible the use of different kinds of data at a certain phase of acquisition.

A further assumption held in this paper is that it must be considered one of the goals of L2 acquisition research to construct a theory which has the power to predict and explain how the learner's interlanguage competence is put to use in its various manifestations. This means that no data type can be excluded in advance. Rather, a specific data type should be studied along with other data types on the same linguistic phenomenon from the same learners in order to define the relationships between the various kinds of data

and single out the conditions for production and perception of a particular kind of data in a certain situational context.

The present paper reports on ongoing research into these questions. The presentation is deliberately kept short, and in many places information that would be needed in order to replicate the studies reported on here, has been omitted due to lack of space. The full account is given in papers that are referred to below.

Data types and elicitation techniques

In addition to what has been called *observational data*, i.e. data obtained from more or less spontaneous speech and writing, various more technically elicited data types have been used in L2 acquisition research during the past 15 years. These other types of data have sometimes been gathered together under the label of *experimental data*. Among the most commonly used types are

1. Elicited production, often with pictorial stimuli, e.g. Berko tests, the Bilingual Syntax Measure, and guided composition
2. Manipulation of given linguistic material, e.g. sentence combining and sentence completion
3. Intuition, grammaticality judgement tests
4. Introspection
5. The cloze procedure
6. Imitation
7. Dictation or partial dictation
8. Translation

Most of these techniques have been used to elicit both spoken and written data. In some of them, both production and perception is exercised, while others require more of the one than the other. Only the first technique comes anywhere near what can be termed "natural" language use, i.e. intended communication of a certain content by a speaker/writer to a listener/reader. This does not imply, however, that elicited production is necessarily the type of experimental data that provides the most illuminating information.

Lines of argumentation regarding choice of data

The question of what data types should be preferred in L2 acquisition research, i.e. the search for *the* data, has been the focus of attention in a number of studies. One late-comer to this discussion is Tarone (1979). Referring to the 'observer's paradox', she states that 'the aim of (applied) linguistic research is to describe the way people talk when they are not being systematically observed'. She observes that interlanguage speakers exhibit stylistic variation just like native speakers, and contents that the most systematic phonological and grammatical patterns are to be found in the 'vernacular' style. This leads her to conclude that observational data are to be preferred to experimental data.

In other types of study, the insufficiency of using observational data alone has been pointed out. Corder (1973), for exampie, mentions both external and internal constraints on such data. External constraints are factors such as limits on the number of observations; low frequency of the observed linguistic phenomenon is one example of internal constraints. Corder's conclusion is that observational data can only give a rough indication of the patterning of most linguistic phenomena in second language acquisition and use.

The most commonly held view, I think, is that observational data in the long run must be combined with experimental data, and that experimental data allow the researcher to go beyond the limitations imposed on interlanguage studies with its emphasis on learner production and open up areas of interlanguage for investigation which may rarely be manifested in spontaneous speech and writing.

Reflecting this view, combinations of observational and experimental techniques have been used and either explicitly or implicitly discussed in some studies. Likewise, combinations of various experimental techniques alone have also been used. For example, in a study by Swain et al. (1978), three test types were used to tap the order in which certain grammatical rules of French were learnt by English speaking children in a French immersion program. The tests were a Berko test (i.e. ***this is a stimp; here we have two*** ...), imitation, and translation. All three data types showed a parallel and successive increase in mastery of the target morphemes, and the results were consistently better on the translation task than on the imitation task; the lowest scores were obtained on the Berko test. It should be observed that

these tests were used mainly in order to get a quantitative measure of improvement in performance over time.

Schmidt (1980), on the other hand, aimed at a qualitative description of deletions in coordinate structures using various techniques to obtain data. The results indicated that the interlanguage rules used by the learners in the different data varied to some extent. It was concluded that different descriptions could have been reached, had any one of the techniques been used in isolation.

To summarize so far, I believe that we ought not to expect exactly the same patterning in different data types from the same individuals, but rather variability because of stylistic variation, variation due to various degrees of formality in the situational context, and other variation dependent on mode of linguistic processing. These conditions should result in differences, at least of a quantitative nature, e.g. more or less targetlike behaviour under certain conditions. It may also be the case that some qualitative differences exist, i.e. different, even contradicting, rules may be used in different data types. Such contradicting data may be the result of the learner's application of a later acquired rule in some kinds of data, for example where monitoring is possible, while the rule it is substituted for is used in other kinds. What we should hope for in these cases, however, is some kind of predictable systematicity in variation.

Present investigations

In order to study how the same learners deal with the same linguistic phenomena in various data types, three linguistic areas of Swedish were chosen for investigation:

1. pronominal copies in relative clauses
2. sentence negation
3. subject-verb inversion in declarative main clauses

I have chosen to exemplify from the first two areas in order to illustrate our results. The study of subject-verb inversion was carried out by Hans Dahlbäck, and it is reported in Dahlbäck (1981). As mentioned above, only a very

brief presentation of our research will be given here. For the pronominal copies study, further information is given in Svalberg (1981), Hyltenstam (1981), and Hyltenstam & Svalberg (1982), for the sentence negation study (in which the same subjects took part as in Dahlbäck's subject-verb inversion study) in Hyltenstam (forthcoming).

The syntactic patterning in the two areas can briefly be described in the following manner. In general, *pronominal copies in relative clauses* do not occur in Swedish. If they had, we would have found sentences of the following type: **Mannen som jag mötte honom igår kommer här*, i.e. 'The man who I met him yesterday comes here' instead of *Mannen som jag mötte igår kommer här*, i.e. 'The man who I met yesterday comes here'. However, under certain conditions, where the clause initiating particle is moved up one clause, pronominal copies also turn up in Swedish as in *De har anställt en man som jag undrar om han är pålitlig*, 'They have hired a man who I wonder whether he is reliable' (see Ljung (1973) for a discussion and more examples). Languages differ in whether or not they have pronominal copies in relative clauses at all, and, if they have, to what extent such elements are utilized. Keenan & Comrie (1977) show that every step in the so called NP Accessibility Hierarchy is a cut off point as regards the deletion of a pronominal copy representing the relativized position.[1] Thus, pronominal copies appear to a successively larger extent as we go down the hierarchy. The NP Accessibility Hierarchy is given here for convenience:

SU > DO > IO > OBL > GEN > OCOMP[2]

As for *sentence negation*, in Swedish it is expressed by a negative particle *inte*[3], 'not', which is essentially placed immediately after the finite verb in main clauses and immediately before it in subordinate clauses. Certain elements may be placed between the finite verb and the negative particle in main clauses, elements such as inverted subjects, especially unstressed ones (*idag kommer han inte*, literally, 'today comes he not'), unstressed objects (*vi såg honom inte*, 'we saw him not'), and other adverbs (*han kommer säkert inte*, 'he comes certainly not'). For a more detailed account, see for example Teleman (1974) and Andersson (1975). A typological study of sentence negation is found in Dahl (1979).

The choice of these two syntactic areas for the present investigation was motivated by two considerations that were not related to the present question of data type variability. Firstly, since their typological patterning can be said to be reasonably well described (Keenan & Comrie 1977, Dahl 1979), it was possible to investigate to what extent there is a parallel patterning in typological and second language acquisition contexts. This question has been considered in Hyltenstam (1977, 1978) for sentence negation, and in Hyltenstam (1981) for pronominal copies in relative clauses. Secondly, both areas exhibit structurally patterned variation which was also demonstrated in these studies. Therefore, it was interesting to see, whether the same kind of patterning in this variability could be found in different data types.

The two studies conducted on pronominal copies in relative clauses and sentence negation respectively can be described as follows:

Pronominal copies in relative clauses: Data types were

1. Elicited written production (a picture was used as stimulus)
2. Elicited oral production (a picture identification task)
3. Imitation
4. Intuition
   a) oral
   b) written

Subjects were 12 Persian, 12 Greek, 12 Spanish, and 9 Finnish speaking adult learners of Swedish. The language groups were chosen in such a way that two of the groups were native speakers of languages with pronominal copies in relative clauses (Persian and Greek) and two of languages without (Spanish and Finnish). In fact, Spanish, like many other languages which do not have these elements in their standard variety, does have pronominal copies in certain styles, at least in some regional varieties (Bejarano & Jörnving 1967).

Length of residence in Sweden was 2 years or less. The learners attended Swedish language courses at Kursverksamheten at Lund and at AMU Liljeholmen in Stockholm. They were at a fairly advanced level, having completed 350-600 hours of instruction prior to this investigation.

Sentence negation: The following data types were used:

1. Free written production
2. A modified cloze technique (one given word was to be placed in one of two slots; the technique is more like type 2 in the introductory enumeration, that of manipulation of given lingustic material)
3. A scrambled words test
4. Imitation
5. Intuition
   a) oral
   b) written

Subjects in this study were 33 adult learners of Swedish with various L1:s; 14 of them had Polish as their native language. All except 3 females from the USA and 1 male from Turkey were above the age of 20. Length of residence in Sweden was 2 years or less for all except one, who had been here for 6 years. The subjects went to courses in Swedish as a second language at Kursverksamheten in Malmö. They had had 100-500 hours of instruction at the time of data collection.

Results

If we first look at the results from the pronominal copies study, it is immediately obvious that all but one of the data types were inappropriate for the phenomenon under study with the actual groups of learners.

In *the written composition task*, a total of 183 relative clauses was produced, but the vast majority of them, or 161, were relativizations of the subject position. The remaining 22 were relativizations of the direct object position. Only 9 pronominal copies were produced. A control group of native speakers of Swedish also produced relative clauses on subject and object positions only, which means that the learners' behaviour could not be seen as a result of an avoidance strategy. Instead, it seems to be a reflection of the fact that relativization of more marked positions require a very specific pragmatic context in order to be used.

The picture identification task, with which we *elicited oral production*, forced the learners to produce relative clauses with all the positions in the NP Accessibility Hierarchy. These data patterned regularly as shown in tables 1-4. Pronominal copies were used to a larger extent in more marked positions, and the scalability figures for the different groups were high. This means that if a pronominal copy was used in a certain position, a pronominal copy could be predicted also in all lower positions in the hierarchy. Deviations from the implicational pattern are circled in the tables.

What is interesting with these results, is the parallelism between the typological pattern established in Keenan & Comrie (1977) and our second language acquisition data. It is also interesting to note that pronominal copies can turn up in data from learners who neither find such elements in their L1 nor in their L2.

The grammaticality judgement task gave a very irregular result. Tables 5-8 from the written intuition data exemplifies this. The data from the spoken grammaticality judgement task also lack patterning. The main difference between these two sets of data is that acceptance of clauses with pronominal copies is higher in the spoken test. Since no clear patterning can be found in these data, it is reasonable to believe that factors other than the presence of pronominal copies are responsible for a large number of the judgements.

Finally, in *the imitation task*, a large number of incorrect imitations were produced. Most of these consisted of omissions of one or several elements from the model sentence. A total of only 11 pronominal copies was produced. (Only grammatical sentences, i.e. without pronominal copies, were used as stimulus sentences.) The omissions generally resulted in sentences where a relativization of a more marked position was changed so that a less marked position, preferably the subject, was relativized, e.g. the sentence *Kvinnan som jag drömmer om* ..., 'the woman that I dream of' was changed to *Kvinnan som drömmer* ..., 'the woman that dreams'.

The data on sentence negation were analyzed according to the same principles that had been employed in my earlier work in this area (Hyltenstam 1977, 1978).

Tables 1-4: Retention (+) and deletion (–) of pronominal copies for four groups of learners of Swedish. Elicited oral production. Implicational scaling according to the NP Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie 1977). From Hyltenstam (1981).

Table 1: Speakers of Persian Scalability 93.1.

Subj nr	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	OCOMP
21	–	–	–	–	–	–
32	–	–	–	–	+	+
17	–	⊕	⊕	–	+	⊙
18	–	⊕	⊕	–	+	+
7	–	–	+	+	+	+
16	–	–	+	+	+	+
6	–	–	+	+	+	+
34	–	+	+	+	+	+
30	–	+	+	+	+	+
28	–	+	+	+	+	+
29	–	+	+	+	+	+
15	–	+	+	+	+	+

Table 2: Speakers of Greek. Scalability 97.1 (if 0 = –), 98.7 (if 0 = +).

Subj nr	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	OCOMP
20	–	–	–	–	–	–
41	–	–	–	–	+	⊙
14	–	–	–	–	+	0
43	–	–	–	–	+	+
12	–	–	–	–	+	+
13	–	–	+	+	+	+
40	–	–	+	+	+	+
27	–	+	+	+	+	+
42	–	+	+	+	+	+
22	–	+	+	+	+	+
11	–	+	+	+	+	+
10	–	+	+	+	+	+

Table 3: Speakers of Spanish. Scalability 90.3.

Subj nr	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	OCOMP
2	–	–	–	–	–	–
31	–	–	–	–	⊕	–
37	–	–	–	–	⊕	–
33	–	–	–	–	⊕	–
3	–	–	–	–	–	+
8	–	–	–	–	+	+
5	–	–	⊕	–	+	⊙
4	–	–	⊕	–	+	+
9	–	–	⊕	–	+	+
19	–	–	+	+	+	+
24	–	+	+	+	+	+
35	–	+	+	+	+	+

Table 4: Speakers of Finnish. Scalability 85.2-92.6 depending on whether 0 = + or –.

Subj nr	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	OCOMP
48	–	–	–	–	0	–
52	–	–	–	–	0	–
44	–	–	–	–	⊕	–
47	–	–	–	–	⊕	–
51	–	–	–	–	⊕	–
45	–	–	–	0	⊕	–
50	–	–	–	–	0	+
46	–	–	–	–	+	+
49	–	–	–	–	+	+

Tables 5-8: Learners' intuitions about written relative clauses containing pronominal copies. (+ = acceptable, – = not acceptable, x = a pronominal copy in the same position both accepted and not accepted.)

Table 5: Speakers of Persian.

Subj nr	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	OCOMP
21	–	–	–	–	+	–
7	–	x	–	+	x	–
17	–	+	x	–	+	–
30	–	+	x	–	+	x
15	–	+	x	+	x	+
32	–	+	+	x	x	+
34	–	+	+	+	+	–
6	x	+	+	x	+	x
28	x	x	+	+	+	x
18	x	+	+	x	+	+
16	+	+	+	x	x	+
29	x	+	x	+	+	+

Table 6: Speakers of Greek.

Subj nr	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	OCOMP
20	–	–	–	–	–	–
11	–	–	–	–	x	–
12	–	–	x	–	+	+
40	–	x	+	x	–	+
14	–	+	–	+	+	x
22	x	x	x	x	+	x
13	x	x	–	+	+	x
41	x	–	x	+	+	+
27	+	+	x	–	x	–
10	+	x	x	+	–	+
42	+	+	x	+	–	+
43	–	+	+	x	+	+

Table 7: Speakers of Spanish.

Subj nr	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	OCOMP
2	–	–	–	–	–	–
31	–	–	–	–	–	–
8	–	x	–	–	–	–
3	–	–	–	–	–	x
37	–	–	x	x	–	–
19	x	–	x	–	–	+
9	–	x	x	–	+	–
35	x	–	x	–	x	x
4	x	–	+	+	–	+
33	–	+	x	+	+	x
24	x	+	+	+	+	–
5	x	+	+	+	+	+

Table 8: Speakers of Finnish.

Subj nr	SU	DO	IO	OBL	GEN	OCOMP
48	–	–	–	–	–	–
49	–	–	–	x	–	–
54	x	–	x	–	–	–
53	–	x	x	–	–	–
47	x	x	–	–	+	–
50	x	–	x	x	+	–
46	x	+	x	+	x	–
45	+	x	x	x	+	x
52	x	x	+	–	+	+
51	x	x	+	x	+	+

There, on the basis of data from a combined cross-sectional and longitudinal study, it was suggested that learners of Swedish go through a number of phases in their acquisition of the placement rules for the Swedish negative particle: Initially, the syntactic distinction between main and subordinate clauses as regards the placement of the negative particle is not observed. This distinction is acquired only in later stages. In the initial phase, a transition from preverbal to postverbal placement of the particle was hypothesized; in this phase, auxiliary verb contexts were more favourable for postverbal placement than main verb contexts. In later phases, where the syntactic distinction between clause types starts to be observed, the task is to 'move back' the particle in subordinate clauses. In this transitional phase, main verb contexts are more favourable for the placement of the particle before the verb than auxiliary verb contexts. *Typical* patterns in the different phases are the following, where phase I and III are variable and exhibit the implicational relationship between more or less favourable contexts. (Figures indicate proportions.):

	Main + sub.clause	
	Aux + NEG	MV + NEG
Phase I	85	60
Phase II	100	100

	Main clause		Sub.clause	
	Aux + NEG	MV + NEG	NEG + MV	NEG + Aux
Phase III	100	100	85	60
Phase IV	100	100	100	100

It is uncertain to what extent the learners go through the initial transition from preverbal to postverbal placement, since many learners in the study are caught when they have already gone through their initial phases. In any case, a number of lerners were found at phase I. These learners had various types of L1:s. Various explanations are proposed for the acquisitional path in Hyltenstam (1977) and (1982).

Of the five data types on sentence negation studied here, *the free written composition task* yielded only fragmentary data, i.e. the data did not reflect negation in all the context types that had turned out to be interesting in previous studies. There were for example very few negated subordinate

clauses, only 8, and most of these occured in a context where both preverbal and postverbal placement of the negative particle is possible in Swedish (cf. Andersson 1975). On the other hand, 87 negated main clauses were produced, but only 4 of these were erroneous, as for example *Han inte gillar sin fru*, 'he not likes his wife' instead of the correct version *Han gillar inte sin fru*, 'he likes not his wife'. Obviously, no patterning between preverbal and postverbal placement of the particle was discernible.

The imitation data is not yet fully analyzed and must therefore be left out here. The results from the remaining data types are shown in tables 9-12. In these tables, it is also indicated which learners are to be found in each of the four phases mentioned above.

In this case, we see a similar patterning in the different data types, except for the intuition data with spoken sentences. Obviously, the oral intuition task was too demanding for the actual group of learners. As can be seen from table 12, the responses here are more irregular than those for the other data types, and in some cases no response at all was given (marked by question marks in the table).

Table 13 shows in summarized form in what phases each individual learner can be found in the different data types. It can be seen here, as in tables 9-12, that the type that differs most is the oral intuition data, and, in fact, the figures here must be considered quite uncertain, as mentioned above. As regards the other three data types, 12 learners are fully stable in what phase they are found in. Typically, these "stable" learners are found at phases where categorical rather than variable rules are used, i.e. at phase II or IV. 10 out of the 12 are found at one of these two phases, the remaining two at phase III, which is characterized by categorical postverbal placement of the negative particle in main clauses and variable post- and preverbal placement in subordinate clauses. Of the remaining learners, 12 range over two phases and 9 over three. It might be thought strange that one and the same learner can be found at such distant phases in different data types. A closer look at some of these cases, however, reveals that the differences might not be that large, although the analysis places the learner at different phases. Take for example subject nr 2 in tables 9-11. In the cloze procedure data, all negative particles are placed after the finite verb categorically. In the scrambled words data, all negative particles but one in a subordinate clause are likewise placed postverbally. In the written intuition task, finally, all particles but two, one in

Table 9: Sentence negation in the cloze task

Ph	S	A+N	M+N	N+M	N+A
I	17	58*	67		
	5	67*	75		
	11	83*	100		
II	1	100	100		
	2	100	100		
	3	100	100		
	8	100	100		
	14	100	100		
	19	100	100		
	27	100	100		
	33	100	100		
III	32	100	83	17	0
	18	100	100	17	0
	26	100	100	0*	17
	10	83*	100	0*	33
	12	100	100	33	17
	31	100	100	50	0
	29	83*	100	50	17
	6	100	100	50	17
	25	100	100	33	33
	15	100	100	67	67
	22	100	100	83	83
IV	4	100	100	100	100
	7	100	100	100	100
	9	100	100	100	100
	13	100	100	100	100
	16	100	100	100	100
	20	100	100	100	100
	21	100	100	100	100
	23	100	100	100	100
	24	100	100	100	100
	28	100	100	100	100
	30	100	100	100	100

Table 10: Sentence negation. Scrambled words

Ph	S	A+N	M+N	N+M	N+A
I	22	75	42		
	32	92	58		
	17	92	75		
II	1	100	100		
	8	100	100		
	10	100	100		
	14	100	100		
	18	100	100		
	19	100	100		
	25	100	100		
	27	100	100		
	31	100	100		
	33	100	100		
III	6	100	83	17	0
	26	100	100	17	0
	2	100	100	17	0
	3	100	100	17	0
	11	100	100	17	0
	15	100	100	33	0
	5	100	100	67	0
	12	83*	100	50	33
	29	100	100	83	0
	9	83	83*	100	17
	20	100	100	83	67
	23	100	100	100	83
	24	100	100	100	83
IV	4	100	100	100	100
	7	100	100	100	100
	13	100	100	100	100
	16	100	100	100	100
	21	100	100	100	100
	28	100	100	100	100
	30	100	100	100	100

Table 11: Sentence negation. Intuition, written

Ph	S	A+N	M+N	N+M	N+A
I	6	50*	58		
	29	92	58		
	2	83*	100		
	10	83*	100		
II	8	100	100		
	14	100	100		
	19	100	100		
	25	100	100		
	26	100	100		
	31	100	100		
	33	100	100		
III	11	100	100	17	0
	12	100	100	0*	17
	27	100	100	0*	17
	18	83*	100	17	17
	1	100	100	17	17
	17	100	100	33	17
	5	83*	100	33	33
	9	100	100	83	33
	15	100	100	67	50
	32	100	100	67	50
	3	100	100	50*	67
	24	100	100	100	50
	28	100	100	100	83
IV	4	100	100	100	100
	7	100	100	100	100
	13	100	100	100	100
	16	100	100	100	100
	20	100	100	100	100
	21	100	100	100	100
	22	100	100	100	100
	23	100	100	100	100
	30	100	100	100	100

Table 12: Sentence negation Intuition, oral

Ph	S	A+N	M+N	N+M	N+A
I	6	50	50		
	31	42?	67		
	27	58	58		
	29	58	58		
	5	67	58		
	15	58*	75		
	2	58*	83		
	32	58*	83		
	33	67*	83		
	14	75*	83		
	8	67*	92		
III	10	83*	100	0*	33
	25	83*	100	0*	33
	17	100	83	0*	50
	18	100	83	0*	50
	11	83*	100	33*	50
	30	100	100	50?	50?
	12	83*	100	67	50
	1	83*	100	100	17
	9	83*	100	50*	67
	24	100	100	83	50
	16	100	100	83	50
	4	83*	100	83	67?
	7	100	100	83	67
	3	100	100	83	83
	22	100	100	83	83
	28	83*	100	100	83
	30	67*	100	100	100
	13	100	100	100	83
IV	23	100	83*	100	100
	21	100	100	100	100
	19	----------			
	26	----------			

Ph = phase, S = subject nr, A = Auxiliary verb, M = Main verb, N = negative particle, * = deviation from the implicational pattern.

Table 13. The learners' phases of acquisition in various data types.

Subj nr	CLOZE	SCRAM. WORDS	INTUIT. WRITTEN	INTUIT. ORAL
1	II	II	III	III
2	II	III	I	I
3	II	III	III	III
4	IV	IV	IV	III
5	I	III	III	I
6	III	III	I	I
7	IV	IV	IV	III
8	II	II	II	I
9	IV	III	III	III
10	III	II	I	III
11	I	III	III	III
12	III	III	III	III
13	IV	IV	IV	III
14	II	II	II	I
15	III	III	III	I
16	IV	IV	IV	III
17	I	I	III	III
18	III	II	III	III
19	II	II	II	-
20	IV	III	IV	III
21	IV	IV	IV	IV
22	III	I	IV	III
23	IV	III	IV	III
24	IV	III	III	III
25	III	II	II	III
26	III	III	II	-
27	II	II	III	I
28	IV	IV	III	III
29	III	III	I	I
30	IV	IV	IV	III
31	III	II	II	I
32	III	I	III	I
33	II	II	II	I

a main clause and one in a subordinate clause, are placed postverbally. In summary, this learner seems to be on the verge of realizing the different patterning in main and subordinate clauses, and this is what turns up as slight differences in different data types.

This last example raises the question as to the appropriacy of the technique of defining and numbering phases. Such a procedure always presupposes the use of criteria, or, rather, more or less arbitrary rules of thumb, that allow the analyst to place the different learners in one particular phase. The numbering, of course, gives an impression of clearcut limits between phases. Therefore, it should be explicitly pointed out that there is nothing to support such delimitations in the successive development the learners go through. The technique should rather be seen as a device to make the description managable. The lack of compatibility between reality and description in this case could in fact be used as an argument against such descriptions. However, if the lack of compatibility is underscored rather than hidden, the procedure seems justifiable.

As regards the relationship between the different data types, it should be noted that this is no simple matter to describe, not even in cases where there is similar patterning in different data types. As table 13 shows, there is obviously no implicational relationship such that a more targetlike behaviour is found in some data types than in others for all learners. The irregular pattern may reflect a state of affairs where there is a great deal of individual variation in the use of language in its various manifestations. It might very well be easier for some learners to detect grammatical deviations in sentences they hear or read, for example, than to produce erroneous free sentences in their own speech and writing, while for others, it might be the other way around.

Discussion and conclusions

This study shows that different elicitation techniques may be appropriate for different linguistic phenomena and for learners at different phases of acquisition. In the area of pronominal copies in relative clauses, only one technique of those that had been utilized gave a patterned result with the particular groups of learners that took part in the investigation. The other techniques

seem to have been too difficult for the learners to handle with such a complex phenomenon as pronominal copies in relative clauses at their actual level of proficiency. With sentence negation, on the other hand, more techniques showed patterned results. Since the learners were not the same in the two studies, no comparison can be made between the two syntactic areas in a straight-forward way. In general, however, the learners in the negation study were at a lower level of proficiency than those of the pronominal copies study. In spite of this, they were able to handle more elicitation techniques. This could be explained by various factors. One obvious such factor is the degree of complexity of the linguistic phenomenon in question. Another is the order in which the various phenomena have been acquired, and a third factor is the way the phenomenon has been handled in instruction. In our case, for example, the phenomenon of negation is extensively dealt with in instruction, while less attention is devoted to the phenomenon of pronominal copies.

It should not be seen as a contradicting result that the learners are found at different phases in the different data types. On the contrary, this must be considered quite normal; typically, more targetlike behaviour should be expected in some data types than in others.

It seems reasonable that the closer to the target the learner is in a certain linguistic area, the larger is the range of techniques that can be used to get access to the learner's interlanguage in that area. As regards level of proficiency, one of the extremes, of course, represents nativelike command of a language, and, in fact, the group of native speakers we used as a control in the pronominal copies study could competently handle all the techniques we used, and the results with all techniques were extremely stable. In early acquisitional phases on the other hand the techniques that can be used may be very restricted in number and type.

It is, however, not only the learner's level of proficiency and the actual linguistic phenomenon that are important. The choice of elicitation techniques is also dependent on other factors such as whether the learner is a child or an adult, whether the learner has a more or less extensive educational background etc. The results of this study, furthermore, point to the possibility that there is a great deal of individual variation regarding what tasks a given learner can handle, and this is an important point, since if there are differences in what types of linguistic functioning are easiest for different

learners, which is almost certainly the case, this should have consequences not only for the question of data elicitation, but also for actual teaching practice.

FOOTNOTES

1. The term *position* is used by Keenan & Comrie (1977) rather than *function*. Their terminology will be followed here.
2. SU = subject, DO = direct object, IO = indirect object, OBL = oblique object; in English – and Swedish – object of preposition, GEN = genitive, OCOMP = object of comparison.
3. Marginally, there are a couple of synonymous particles, *icke*, *ej*, the use of which, however, is confined to specific styles.

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